

HUMAN SERVICES. NEWS

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The Bureau of Health offers the following recommendations to reduce the risk of accidental carbon monoxide poisoning during the winter heating season:

Recommendations for safe practices during a power outage.

- Generators should only be placed outside the home in an area with plenty of free-flowing outside air / Generators should be placed well away from home windows, doors or air intakes / Generators should not be placed in an enclosed or semi-enclosed space (such as basement, cellar bulkhead, attached garage or porch) where carbon monoxide can build up to dangerous levels and seep into living areas.
- Kerosene heaters should only be used in a well ventilated room, either by keeping doors to other rooms open or keeping a window partially open (at least 1 inch). / Use only K-1 grade fuel in kerosene heaters. / Follow the manufacturer recommendations for setting the proper wick level.
- Outdoor cooking devices (such as gas or charcoal grills, gas camp stoves) should only be used outside.
- Indoor gas cooking stoves should only be used for cooking (not for extended periods of time as a source of heat).
- Keep chimney flue and a window open when burning decorative gas fireplace logs as a heat source.

General recommendations for the winter heating season.

- Install a carbon monoxide monitor that has been certified by Underwriters Laboratory standard #2034 in your home (available at hardware and department stores). Make sure the monitor has a battery power backup, or it won't be of use during a power outage. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recommends that each home should have at least one carbon monoxide detector in the area outside individual bedrooms. CPSC believes that carbon monoxide detectors are as important to home safety as smoke detectors are.
- Perform yearly maintenance on all heating systems, including furnaces, oil and gas-fired water heaters, and fireplaces. Chimneys and flues should be kept clean and unobstructed to prevent the backup of deadly carbon monoxide.
- Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning. The initial symptoms of CO poisoning are similar to the flu (but without the fever). These symptoms are headache, nausea, dizziness, and vomiting. Other symptoms include fatigue, chest pain, and shortness of breath.

What should you do if you suspect CO poisoning?

If you or anyone in the home suspect you are being poisoned by carbon monoxide, you should first leave the house immediately, and then call your local fire department or 911. Seek medical attention by contacting either the Maine Poison Control Center (1-800-442-6305) or your physician **after** you have left the area where you suspect the carbon monoxide is present.